Army Acquisition Executive Claude M. Bolton Jr. presents the Acquisition Commander of the Year Award to COL Mary Brown along with LTG John S. Caldwell Jr.

JTRS team to maintain objective schedule momentum and deliver exceptional results for five JTRS clusters and responsibility for fielding more than 100,000 systems with a $23 billion budget.

"On behalf of myself and my team, we've worked extraordinarily hard to get the JTRS radio out and tested and I thank you for this award," said Lockhart.

Acquisition Commander of the Year — Colonel

The Acquisition Commander of the Year at the Colonel/GS-15 level was presented to COL Mary Brown from the Army Test and Evaluation Command, Aberdeen Test Center. As the Aberdeen Test Center Commander, Brown manages 60-plus acres of test ranges and 73 major test facilities. She also oversees operations involving nearly 1,600 military, civilian and contractor personnel and is responsible for developmental testing of combat and combat support systems; ammunition, including small rockets and missiles; and Navy ship structures. Brown's organization is committed to ensuring that Soldiers receive the safest and best equipment available.

"I would like to recognize my bosses for their unwavering support," said Brown. "This is a team award — it took a team effort to win this. I represent more than 150 civilians and officers who work hard every day and who know how much their work means to others."

Acquisition Commander of the Year — Lieutenant Colonel

The Acquisition Commander of the Year Award at the Lieutenant Colonel/GS-14 level was presented to LTC Jack Cunnane, U.S. Army Contracting Agency, Southern Region. Cunnane's command was directly responsible to the U.S. Army III Corps for missions and quality of life support at Fort Hood, TX, and in supporting force projection and rapid deployment contingency operations. His support enabled III Corps to complete 100 percent of its mission requirements. Cunnane further demonstrated his dedication by volunteering to serve in Iraq to establish the joint contracting element that supported ongoing warfighter operations in theater.

Acquisition Commander of the Year LTC Jack Cunnane

"This award would not be possible if not for the civilians and soldiers at the Army Contracting Agency," Cunnane said. "There's truly nothing they wouldn't do for the Army."

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Natick Integrated Materiel Management Center's Fire Response Team

Daniel Galarza

On Dec. 18, 2002, at approximately 8 p.m., molten red flames engulfed a major military parachute storage, packing and maintenance facility in Vicenza, Italy. The facility contained thousands of personnel and reserve parachute systems. The cause of the blaze was linked to faulty electrical wiring. The extreme heat from the fire caused ceiling light fixtures and electrical conduits to melt. On Dec. 27, 2002, DOD response team personnel were called away from their holiday activities and flown to Vicenza, Italy. The team consisted of aerial delivery representatives from the Natick Soldier Center (NSC) and Integrated Materiel Management Center (IMMC), Natick, MA.

IMMC inspectors recommend that USLs distorted by heat and contact with metal storage bins be immediately replaced.

The parachute packing and storage facility had been operational since the early 1980s. The storage site in Vicenza houses more than 3,300 T-10D Troop Back Parachute Assemblies and approximately 3,200 Modified Improved Reserve Parachute System (MIRPS) parachutes. The site's main function is to store, pack and maintain parachutes in support of airborne operations. The facility also serves as a major airborne equipment logistics platform for the Army's Southern European Task Force (TF) Command. Additionally, parachutes are stored at the site for use in real-world contingencies such as *Operations Iraqi Freedom* and *Enduring Freedom*.

The NSC team's mission was to evaluate and assess the burned parachutes' form, fit and function. Most parachute equipment is made of nylon, which, under intense heat conditions, can melt or burn and become nonfunctional. The team had to inspect two types of parachutes.

> The urgency of restoring the parachute system quantities to meet contingency requirements necessitated a round-the-clock, 24-hour operation.

T-10D Troop Back Parachute Equipment Characteristics. The T-10D Troop Back Parachute Assembly provides the capability to safely deliver an airborne soldier and individual equipment from an aircraft in flight for a vertical assault on an enemy. The materials used in manufacturing the parachute include:

- Canopy — 35 feet in diameter and comprised of 1.1-ounce rip stop nylon cloth.
- Pack tray — made of 7.5-ounce nylon duck material.
- Deployment bag — made of 8.2-ounce sateen cloth.
- Universal static line (USL) — made of 15 feet of tube edge material.
- Suspension lines — made of type II nylon cord.
- Risers — made of type XIII 30-inch nylon webbing.

MIRPS. The MIRPS is an emergency parachute system that is used only after a malfunction is detected in the main parachute. With the exception of a stainless steel ripcord and compression spring, the canopy and pack tray materials are identical to the T-10 parachute.

The Mission Begins

On Dec. 27, aerial delivery representatives boarded a plane bound for Vicenza. The team consisted of IMMC Aerial Delivery Sustainment Team Leader Gloria Wooten-Standard, NSC Personnel Airdrop Systems Equipment Specialist John R. Mahon, NSC Textile Technologist Laurra Winters and NSC Master Airdrop Technician CW4 Murry Chapman and Master Airdrop Technician CW3 Cortez Fraser of the Defense Distribution Center, Susquehanna, PA. The team's main purpose was to evaluate and assess the parachute material's and hardware's serviceability. They were also tasked to inspect and determine the availability and replacement costs of the fire-exposed parachutes and estimate what it would take in time and resources to restore the facility to mission-capable status. The urgency of restoring the parachute system quantities to meet contingency requirements necessitated a round-the-clock, 24-hour operation.

The inspection consisted of first separating the chutes that could be easily labeled "unserviceable." These parachutes displayed severe signs of melted nylon, large holes in the canopies, burn marks and breaks in the material caused by flames or extreme heat. After conducting a visual inspection, the team began the grueling task of individually inspecting each

parachute system's component/subcomponent for the following:

- Parachute system hardware including condition, finish and strength.
- Parachute material degradation including canopy, harness, pack tray and suspension lines.

The team sought to answer command leadership questions that were posed to them upon their arrival. Inspection details are included below.

What are the effects of smoke on parachute systems? Winters was instrumental in providing answers to this very important question. Tests were conducted on the pH level of the soot found on the parachutes to determine if the acid from the soot had degraded the parachute systems' materials. Test results indicated the materials were well within the range of serviceability for that particular item. For instance, the test results for the T-10 Canopy indicated an average pH level of 6.9. The specifications range for canopy serviceability is from 5.5 to 9.0. Therefore, the canopies, other than containing dusty black particles, were serviceable for actual use.

What is the effect of extreme heat on the parachutes? Besides fire, petroleum distillants can degrade parachute fabrics and accelerate the material's usage life. Fortunately, the firefighters who fought the blaze used only water. USLs experienced material distortion as a result of the heat generated by the metal containers they were stored in. For safety reasons, the team recommended that all affected USLs be replaced. The remaining system components underwent testing for proper pH levels as well as a thorough physical inspection. The inspectors determined the parachutes that survived the fire intact, could be put back into service.

When the fire began, 95 percent of the parachutes were packed. If the outside of the packed chutes were not damaged, is it safe to assume the inside of the chutes were unaffected as well? The team quickly and unanimously decided that no assumptions would be made where safety was concerned. Each parachute was physically inspected for serviceability regardless of its outward appearance.

Tests were conducted on the pH level of the soot found on the parachutes to determine if the acid from the soot had degraded the parachute systems' materials.

The soot from the fire formed a thick layer on the parachutes. Would they all require washing? The amount of soot resulting from the fire was almost overwhelming. The water spray and mist used to douse the blaze stained the parachute fabric materials and rusted the metal hardware. The fine mist of black particles embedded themselves in the parachute and hardware. Nylon and cotton parachute materials, as well as worker clothing, were covered and stained with this natural black camouflage. Additionally, tests had already determined the soot to be more of an aesthetic nuisance than a genuine performance impairment. The criteria of form, fit and function had been met. Brushes were used to remove gross amounts of soot. As a result, the inspection team did not require that the parachutes systems be washed. Just to be sure, the team sent worst-case samples of materials and hardware to Natick, MA, for further evaluation.

How much will it cost to replace the unserviceable equipment or parts within? Many systems did not require total replacement. For example, after replacing several USLs, the parachute system became serviceable and was placed back in contingency. Several pack trays were shipped from the United States to make the systems complete. The detailed inspection helped identify the defective/unserviceable components, allowing the organization to requisition just what they needed, thereby decreasing the time it took to replenish their operational and contingency stocks. IMMC's Wooten-Standard was on-hand throughout the operation and was able to give on-the-spot authorization for procurement of replacement parts and systems. The final cost of replacing parts and/or systems was more than $500,000.

Regaining Soldier Confidence

News of the Vicenza parachute storage facility fire spread quickly throughout the southern European military community. Soldiers expressed safety concerns over having to depend on equipment that had been exposed to extreme heat and smoke conditions. Soldiers entertained visions of hurtling toward the ground as air rushed through big gaping burn holes in their parachutes. Southern European TF

leaders asked the aerial delivery team to assist in restoring Soldier confidence.

On Jan. 6, 2003, the TF commander held a special briefing to inform soldiers about overall parachute condition and to inspire soldier confidence in their equipment. The Natick aerial delivery team played a crucial role in the briefing. For instance, Mahon provided a summary of the team's inspections results. He reviewed the inspection standards, findings and recommendations. Winters discussed soot and pH acid level test results. A microscope was also set up for soldiers to examine the microscopic smoke and soot particles on the nylon cloth material.

Finally, the team fielded direct questions from the paratroops. They provided straightforward responses to the technical questions. At the briefing's conclusion, Soldier safety concerns were allayed and confidence in the parachute systems was restored.

The Aerial Delivery Response Team's validation came in March 2003. The team received news that an airborne brigade from Italy had just performed a combat airdrop mission in Iraq without incident. More importantly, the brigade used the parachutes that were involved in the Vicenza parachute facility fire. It did not take long to realize the parachutes used by the brigade were the very same chutes that were inspected and recertified 2 months prior by aerial delivery team members Wooten-Standard, Mahon, Winters, Chapman and Fraser. The team takes great pride knowing that they played a vital role in helping combat units win the airborne war over Iraq.

DANIEL GALARZA is a recently retired Army Major. He is an Aerial Delivery Equipment Specialist with the U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armament Command's Commodity Business Office. He holds a B.A. in communications from Southwest Texas State University.

ASC Booth Pulses With Activity at AUSA 2003

Meg Williams (Photos by Mike Roddin)

Location. Location. Location. When it came to this year's Association of the United States Army (AUSA) Annual Meeting, held Oct. 6-8, 2003, the Acquisition Support Center (ASC) booth space was hot property.

An AUSA Annual Meeting visitor learns more about AAC/ASC during his visit to ASC's booth.

ASC designed its booth with striking new images including the Abrams tank, Black Hawk helicopter and desert warfighters to focus on ASC's 2003 goal to Strengthen Our Link with the Warfighter. Oversize American and Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) flags proudly flew high above the multimedia display, helping pinpoint ASC's location in a very crowded, newly opened Washington Convention Center. The 20′ x 20′ ASC space pulled in an estimated 6,000 visitors who learned more about ASC's goals and objectives and mission to develop, improve and integrate the systems and services that enable the U.S. Army to meet its non-negotiable contract to fight and win the Nation's wars.

Taking particular interest were Army Acquisition Executive and